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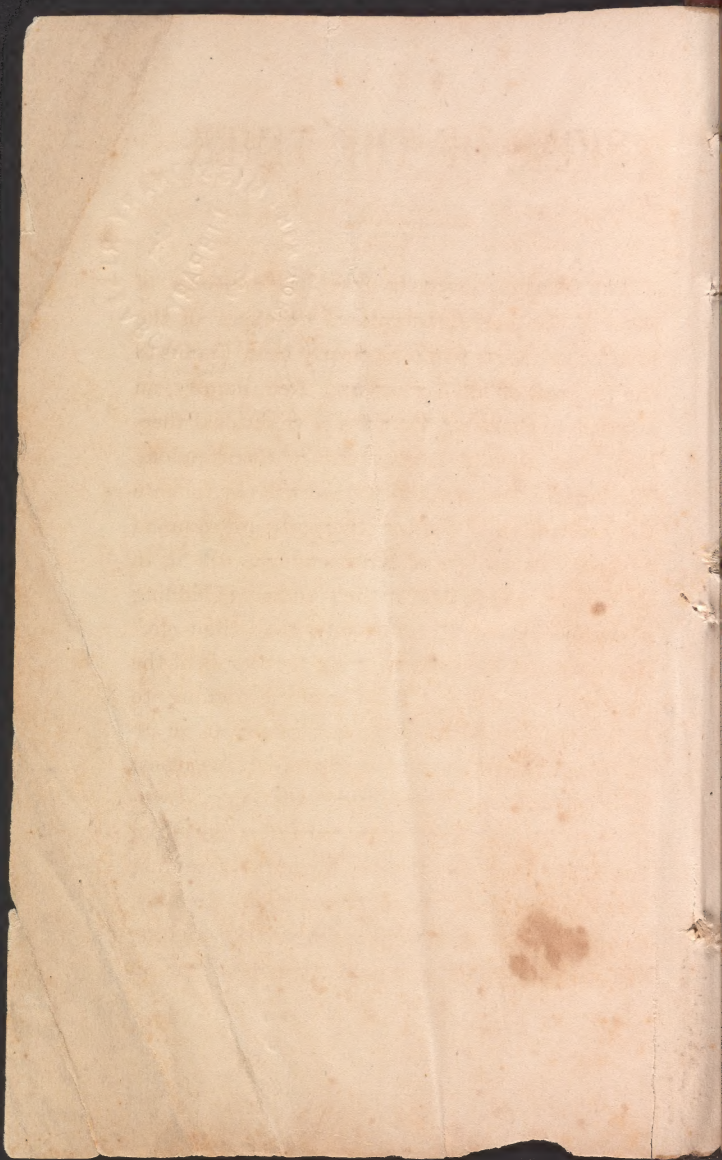
SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

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"Truth will triumph, not untruth."  
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Calcutta:

PRINTED AT THE STANHOPE PRESS,
182, BOW-BAZAR ROAD.

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1864.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE following extracts from the writings of some of the most distinguished thinkers of the present age serve to prove clearly that, thanks to the progress of intelligence and free inquiry, an attempt to shake off the yoke of traditional theology, has already commenced in Christendom. The independent spirit of the age will not tolerate the prostration of the soul beneath any human authority in matters of salvation : nor will it, in its onward march, halt at the peremptory bidding of orthodoxy,—“ Thus far only shalt thou go.” Freedom and Progress are the watchwords of the nineteenth century. It is likewise beginning to be felt that true faith does not consist in an intellectual assent to historical events, but in earnest spiritual reliance upon the ever-living, ever-present Deity ; and that salvation far from depending upon any literary capacity of wading through thousand folios of academic divinity, comparing passages, expounding texts, weighing evidences, and solving complicated problems of

metaphysics, history, geography, ethnology, criticism, &c. denotes simply the regeneration of the soul by thorough resignation to the justice and mercy of the God of Salvation. Many an earnest soul is strenuously protesting against the worship of the "dead letter," of antiquated symbols, and lifeless dogmas, and vindicating the living revelations of the spirit within—those supreme pandects of Intuitive Religion which are engraven on the tablets of the soul. A strong yearning after the Living and Spiritual is thus clearly manifest. Nor, again, does the controversial and jealous spirit of sectarian dogmatism accord with the Catholic views of the age. History has portrayed in frightful colors the mischievous effects of sectarianism, and has fully proved that *opinion* cannot serve as the bond of religious confraternity—that what is local, contingent, and circumstantial cannot constitute the basis of a church. The true church of God is above the influences of time and place, it stands upon the catholic principles of Faith and Love, and binds all mankind in one Universal Brotherhood; such a church many are looking forward to with eager expectations.

In few, the signs of the times display an unmistakable tendency to what is Progressive, Living, Spiritual, and Catholic and fully sanction the hope that the "church of the Future" will be Theism—the Supreme Heaven-born Brahmoism! May God bless those stout-hearted seekers of truth who are humbly laboring in distant lands to promote the spiritual emancipation of humanity, and are paving the way for the advent of the True Church!

"Already is it seen that the true advancement of theology does not depend so much upon any logical or purely inductive processes applied to the Scriptural data as upon the clearing of our religious intuitions, and the higher development of our whole religious consciousness. Thus as a higher and more spiritual philosophy advances the arena of theological research will be removed more and more from the region of these mere mechanical and inductive principles, and the main efforts of theologians be directed to the development of those lofty spiritual intuitions, in which Christianity, as a religion, essentially consists, and by the light of which alone

we can interpret the language either of nature or revelation.

We affirm it therefore as an expectation which if there be any truth in the significance of the past must *inevitably* be realized : that the scattered and disjointed elements of Protestantism, those pulverized fragments of our religious life which have been isolated by the asserted supremacy of the individual judgment and the all-sufficiency of logical processes must ere long seek for a new and a higher unity in the intuitional consciousness." *Philosophy of Religion* by J. D. Morell.

" The reason why many have been so anxious to represent the letter of the Bible as inspired is that there may be a *fixed standard* for truth in the world. They do not consider that the letter can never serve as a standard for the *Spirit* of Christianity—that the two are altogether incommensurable—that the letter *alone*, in fact, never has secured unity in the Church—but that the unity we so much yearn after comes only through the development of the religious *life*. This being the case where is the value or reasonableness of laying so great a

stress upon the letter when after all we *must* be brought, on any hypothesis, to one and the same conclusion, namely, that the spirit of Truth interpreted by Divine aid and perceived through the awakened religious consciousness of true believers is the real and essential revelation—the sole basis of Christian unity—the appeal to which we all in the end practically repair? Whether the words be dictated or not, there is therefore exactly the same necessity for another and spiritual appeal, which is in fact nothing but affirming in the spirit of our whole previous analysis that as all revelation must be made to the intuitional faculty, mere material and logical appliances, whether in the form of writing or speaking can only avail as *means* towards the realization of the great end implied in the idea of *a revelation from God.*—*Ibid.*

“Would that the whole idea of inspiration were thus brought as a moral power to bear upon the progress of the Christian Church; would that the unity of the Church were placed, not in the deadness of the letter, but in the higher realization of the spirit of the truth. Then at length should we see the dawn of a

brighter day when the essence would be placed before the symbol—the living before the dead—and when the Gospel would come to us, not in *word* only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power.”—*Ibid.*

“Why should we be perpetually craving after a stiff literal verbal infallibility? Christianity consists not in propositions—it is a life in the soul; its laws and precepts are not engraven on stone, they can only be engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart.”—*Ibid.*

Why are we still seeking the law of God in the “letter” of Jewish books, when the “Spirit” of these very books refers us to our own Heart as the tablet of the Almighty? Why do we go on with endless and fruitless quotation of obsolete “texts” to justify our postponement of Justice, Mercy, and Faith to trivial questions of circumstantial belief and ceremonial practise? If it were not matter of actual experience, it would sound incredible that men, women and children of all classes should, in this Age and Country, be summoned to read, mark, and learn, with prostration of soul, the oriental imaginings of Arab historians and poets, who lived and died some

thousands of years since. It seems an infatuation almost surpassing example, that Civilized Christians of the nineteenth century should be called upon to listen with awe to the wild traditions of a remote Syrian tribe, celebrating the triumphs of their furious, jealous and fickle "God of Hosts" and "God of Battles." Yet week after week, year after year we go on ignoring the religious light of our own land and our own times in favor of the patriarchal haziness that obscured the land of Canaan in the days of Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Sampson, David and Ezra. Our "Sabbaths," our "solemn meetings," our "appointed feasts," are still set apart to instruction, setting forth how the Sun and Moon stood still to countenance the slaughter of men by men; how the noon-tide shadow went back ten degrees to comfort a King; how the Ass opened her mouth in articulate talk with the Prophet; how city walls fell prostrate at the trumpet's blast, and how an iron axe floated at the good man's call."—*Catholicity Spiritual and Intellectual* by T. Wilson.

Man is indeed a "Holy Bible" of his God, close-written with "the inspiration of the Al-

mighty that giveth him understanding." Not a human work of pen and ink embodied in paper and paste, but a divine *afflatus* of mind and soul incarnate in the noblest form of flesh and blood. Every generation of Man is, or ought to be a new and improved edition of the Holiest Bible extant in this terrestrial Planet; the fault is our own if we reprint servile copies of the same type."—*Ibid.*

"As Protestants we must cherish the Bible, but not worship it; the Soul must do with it as with the net to which the Kingdom of Heaven is likened in the Gospel,—must choose the good, cast away the bad, and neglect the indifferent; for like the net, the Bible has gathered of every kind."—*Ibid.*

"The "Church of the future" will be the reflection of the spiritual condition of the world of *to-day*, and not the lifeless image of a by-gone age. Christians will not, much longer, dispute whether they shall adopt the language of the Nicene age, or of the Protestant Reformation—of the Tractarian or Tridentine theology, in their confessions or liturgies. The mind of the 19th century has a growing tendency to a

reliance rather upon "*insight*" than upon "*tradition*," and the memories of the past, and will have its own appropriate expression in religious faith, as well as in philosophy and science. It is as little disposed to borrow its theology from Athanasius or from Cranmer, as it is to adopt the philosophy of Aristotle, or the science of Archimedes, in exclusion of the higher insight of Bacon or of Locke—of Newton—of Humboldt—of Leverrier, or of Berzelius. The revelations of God to man will not be looked for, alone, in the plains of Palestine—in the valley of the Jordan, or in the land of Goshen; nor will they, any longer, be considered as exclusively confined to the writings of Jewish prophets, or Christian evangelists. It has been said, that to seek our divinity in books is "to seek the living amongst the dead," and to confine the spiritual bounty of God to primitive and barbarous ages, is virtually to deny those attributes of perpetual and omnipresent justice and mercy with which every rational creed has hitherto invested Him."—*Popular Christianity by F. J. Foxton.*

“ From the present condition of the Church, which I have attempted to describe, we may, I think, fairly infer that a vital and organic change in her system, and not merely a superficial adaptation of her teaching to the spirit of the age, is imminent and certain, and that a reformation, far more extensive than has hitherto embellished her history, inevitably awaits her. Her “ whole head is sick,” her “ whole heart is faint.” Even in the multitude of her counsellors there is no “ strength,” but rather confusion, vacillation and dismay.”—*Ibid.*

“ The apparent excitement in our Churches, so triumphantly appealed to as evidence of the revival of the popular creed, is the first rising of the tempest that is destined to overwhelm it. The zeal of the age is for knowledge and for truth ; and, though it may, for a moment, pass into the dead forms of the old superstition, it will soon outgrow its narrow tenement. The world is about to complete the triumph of toleration by declaring that man shall no longer legislate for man in the concerns of his soul.”—*Ibid.*

"The faith, then, that "justifies" is not faith in human events long-passed away, but in Divine instincts still throbbing in the human breast—faith in that fair idea of perfection that the Spirit of God reveals to us in our highest and purest moments."—*Ibid.*

"The faith that depends on historical knowledge belongs, exclusively, to those whose business or pleasure may lead them to this literary banquet—a coarser and homelier, and, perhaps, a healthier diet must be found for those who have neither the taste, leisure, nor the learning, to leaven their spiritual concerns with the luxuries of an elegant literature."—*Ibid.*

"If Christ were a man, he is our *pattern*; "the possibility of our race made real." If he were God—a partaker of God's nature, as the orthodox maintain—then they are guilty of a cruel mockery in speaking of him as a type, a model of human excellence. How can one endowed with the perfections of a God be an example to beings encumbered with the weaknesses of humanity? Adieu, then, to Jesus as anything but a Propounder of doctrines, an Utterer of precepts!"—*Creed of Christendom by R. W. Greg.*

"Miracles, we say, are not, and never can be, a sure foundation for revealed religion—an historic creed. A true Revelation addressed to all mankind, and destined for all ages, must be attested by evidence adequate and accessible to all men and to all ages. It must carry with it its own permanent and unfading credentials."—*Ibid.*

"Strange conformation of mind ! which can find no adequate foundation for its hopes, its worship, its principles of action, in the far stretching universe, in the glorious firmament, in the deep, full soul, bursting with unutterable thoughts—yet can rest all, with a trusting simplicity approaching the sublime, on what a book relates of the sayings and doings of a man who lived eighteen centuries ago !"—*Ibid.*

"There is, be the cause what it may, a total alienation between the British Churches and the British people. The same may be said of the other European countries already noticed. In France, in Germany, in Italy, and in England, the cry is, the Church is not the Church of the people."—*Religious Scepticism by J. Langford.*

"The constant assertion that if we reject a part, we must reject the whole ; that every fact

is alike the direct revelation of God ; the bowing down to the letter which killeth, with an utter forgetfulness of the spirit, which alone giveth life ; the repeated charge that we have only to believe and not to question ; the daily making of truth itself a heresy ; in a word, Bibliolatry in all its phases has done, and is still doing, vital injury to the cause of a daily, earnest, and vital religious life manifesting itself amongst us.”—*Ibid.*

“ Each party claiming to draw its belief, its forms, and its doctrines from the Bible ; each drawing texts therefrom to establish its own peculiar tenets ; has converted the life-inspiring Book into a divinity too sacred to be touched ; or a dusty assemblage of texts for supporting its views and establishing its own creed. The practical results of such proceedings have been most disastrous. Nothing is now more common than the exclamation, ‘ You can prove anything from the Bible ! ’ ”—*Ibid.*

“ The mistake which sectarianism has committed of making opinion the standard of piety has been most fatal. Every nonconformist has set up an orthodoxy the departure from which is

deemed damnation ; and while the dissentients are quarreling over the disputed point, thousands go down to death, uninfluenced by the genial and soul-preserving spirit of religion."—*Ibid.*

" We know of no sight so sad, as the condition of the religious world in England at the present time."—*Ibid.*

" However various the revelations we may receive from without, and whether we recognize among those revelations certain sacred books, we should yet feel that the highest and most beautiful revelation is that which is within ; that the Individual is to himself the great revelation by which all other revelations must be tested."—*Elements of Individualism by W. Maccall.*

" I believe that the Past should be regarded as the Preparation of the Present and the guide of the Future ; but not, in any respect, as a perfect model either for the Present or the Future."—*Ibid.*

" It is a mistake however for the unsectarian mind to suppose that from taking an unsectarian position, isolation would be an inevitable result. In quitting special connection with a particular sect or a particular party, in order to assume its

Individuality again, it would find that it had only brought itself into fraternal contact with all sects and all parties especially with those in all sects and all parties with whom it would most willingly fraternize. It would find that it had only widened association instead of cutting itself off from all association. It would also discover a still more comprehensive, a still nobler association than this, if once it seized the courage to burst away from sectarian bondage,—community with the brotherhood of Truth throughout the world, with the poets, with the philosophers, with the philanthropists, who in all lands are working for no other object than the happiness and enlightenment of man, and who obey no other inspiration than that of making the Universe, material and spiritual, a more glad and glorious revelation to the human intelligence.”—*Ibid.*

“Be it ours, my friends, to do what so few have the light and the courage to do, to be alike unsectarian in our religious and political attitude and utterances; to labor with the good of all sects and of all parties for common objects of social emancipation; and doubt not that thousands

and thousands, even in bigoted England, will be induced to follow an example so sublime, and to work in the same noble spirit that we work for the elevation and regeneration of our race.”—*Ibid.*

“ If the views which have been advanced are sound, it is plain that there is a Religion of Humanity,—a religion which belongs to human nature ; which is not the religion of the western world or of the eastern world, or exclusively perhaps of this world at all ; but it may be of all worlds,—a religion which does not descend to have an earthly metropolis, whether it be Rome, Jerusalem or Mecca,—a religion which is not bound up within the covers of a book, be it the Veds, the Koran, or the Bible,—a religion which is not the property of the white race or of the black race ; not the religion of Europe or of Hindoostan, of Greece or of Persia, of Palestine or of Egypt,—a religion which existed before Moses reformed that of Egypt, and has existed since Luther reformed that of Europe,—a religion which is not subordinated to the influences of climate ; which does not rise or disappear with the attainment by mankind of a

different stage,—a more advanced stage of civilization ; which is the same permanently ; continues as human nature continues ; which is to be found wherever man is found ; common as sense and reason, thought and feeling, mind and heart ; and which as it refers itself back to the earliest ages of history, so will it not grow dim with age, nor fade in years through the coming generations.”—*Religious Ideas by Fox.*

“ I shall not now pause to expose the vulgar fallacy of confounding faith with that intellectual process, that “ conjunction of ideas” which constitutes belief in an historical fact. * *

Happily so strong a reaction is taking place even in the bosom of the Protestant Churches against this absurd error, that it may be hoped it will ere long be exploded. The kernel of truth of which it appears to be the utterly worthless shell is doubtless this :—that the acceptance with heart and head of the doctrine of the “ GOODNESS OF GOD” (set forth in the teaching and life of Christ, *or in any other way*) is the SALVATION of the soul.”—*Intuitive Morals, Part II.*

“ The more we *know* the less we shall *believe* in a traditional miraculous revelation. The *better*

we are, the less we shall *need* to believe in one.”
—*Ibid.*

“Man is greater than the Bible. That is one ray out of the sun—one drop from the infinite ocean. The inward Christ, which alone abideth for ever, has much to say which the Bible never told, though it may imply the whole. The Bible is made for man, not man for the Bible. Its truths are as old as the creation, repeated more or less purely in every tongue. Let its errors and absurdities no longer be forced on the pious mind, but perish forever ; let the word of God come through Conscience, Reason, and holy Feeling, as light through the windows of morning. Worship with no master but God, no creed but Truth, no service but Love, and we have nothing to fear.”—*Discourse of Religion by T. Parker.*

“To set up other men’s inspiration as our law, is to disown that teaching of God, to which alone they owed their eminence. Christians were certain to degenerate, the moment they began to worship apostles, books and church-rules and precedent and tradition, and thus to sip at other men’s buckets, instead of drawing living

water from the true fountain, God himself.”—
The Soul by F. W. Newman.

“For to the life of God neither belief in miracles availeth anything, nor unbelief ; but a new Creation ; and Faith that worketh by Love : and as many as walk after THIS RULE, peace shall be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”—*Ibid.*

“ ‘ Read within ! ’ is the audible command of his own mind, to every human being—“ Read *within* ! ” Go down to the deep place of intuitions, which own no earthly fountain ! Search, Look, Gaze, Try to detect and decipher the mysterious writing on the primitive tablets of the soul, which no created hand has traced ! Listen, also ! in that profoundest, sacredest adytum—away, from all outer sounds, which derange and dull the organ of hearing, wait for the faintest whisperings of the holy oracle ! Look and Listen, Wait and Gaze, long, patiently, painfully ! The oracle *will* utter itself, the hidden holy writing *will* shine out, and some divine letters, words, sentences *will* become legible to the eye ! ”—*Province of Reason by J. Young.*

“It is perhaps God’s will that we should be taught in this our day, among other precious lessons, not to build up our faith upon a book, though it be the Bible itself, but to realize more truly the blessedness of knowing that He, Himself, the Living God, our Father and Friend, is nearer and closer to us than any book can be,—that His voice within the heart may be heard continually by the obedient child that listens for it, and that *that* shall be our Teacher and Guide in the path of duty which is the path of life, when all other helpers—even the words of the best of Books—may fail us.”—*The Pentateuch critically examined by the Right Rev. J. W. Colenso.*

THE END.

